



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service



# California Farm News

Cooperating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture

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## USDA REPORTS IN-DEPTH LOOK AT AMERICAN INDIAN FARMERS

*Report Released on Heels of Productive Discussion Between USDA, Tribal Leaders*

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**WASHINGTON.** Nov 4, 2009 – In celebration of American Indian Heritage Month the U.S. Department of Agriculture today reported that there are nearly 80,000 American Indian operators on 61,472 farms and ranches across the United States. This represents an 88-percent increase over the number of American Indian farmers USDA counted in 2002. The report was released on the heels of a meeting held today with more than 100 tribal leaders and members and Senior USDA officials including Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan in advance of the White House Tribal Nations Conference.

“Today’s first-of-its-kind meeting to expand cooperation and consultation between the Department of Agriculture and tribal nations was a great success because it advanced robust government-to-government dialogues about how USDA can improve as a service provider and raise awareness among tribes about the multitude of ways that USDA works to improve the lives of our nation’s tribal communities,” said Secretary Vilsack. “Tribal producers can play key roles in building local production and can be an important engine of economic development in tribal communities.”

The Census also showed a 124-percent increase in the number of Native Americans who were the principal operator of a farm or ranch. Their operations account for nearly 50 million acres of farmland in the United States. When compared to all farms nationwide, those operated by American Indians tend to be smaller in terms of sales, averaging \$40,331, but significantly larger in size, averaging 1,431 acres.

“The 2007 Census of Agriculture marked the first time USDA attempted to collect a Census report from every farmer on American Indian reservations in all states,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “U.S. farmers and ranchers are becoming more diverse and through programs such as the Census we are placing a special emphasis on outreach to traditionally under-represented populations to ensure everyone is counted and served by USDA.”

This information, from the latest Census of Agriculture, is part of the most comprehensive statistical program and outreach effort the department has ever conducted on American Indian reservations.

More information on American Indian farmers and ranchers at the national, state and county level is available online at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

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